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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
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SUBJECT: "How Cook Talks". Information from food specialists of the
U.S. Department of Agriculture

The other day, I was talking with a young woman who's learning to cook. She's teaching herself. Gets helpful hints from the radio and from magazines. And her friends give her recipes.

She said, "You'd never guess one of my big problems. It's understanding some of the simple words in the recipes. Words like scald and baste and braise and blanch and mince. Or words like fricassee, marinate and saute!. Experienced homemakers know this language of the cook. But no one ever bothers to explain these words and expressions to those of us who are just learning to cook."

That set me to thinking. There are a lot of terms we use in talking about cooking that are specially related to cooking. So today, I'm going to explain some of the terms that are commonly used.

And I'll begin with the first one my young friend mentioned..."to scald." In the language of the cook, to scald means to heat just before the boiling point. To scald milk, you heat it in the top part of a covered double boiler. Over boiling water, of course. Heat it until it's bubbly and foamy on top. That's what we mean when we say "scald the milk."

Now let's take the cook's term "to baste." Have you ever been in the kitchen when someone was baking a hen? Every once in a while she'd take a peek in the oven...pull the baking pan to the front...and use a ladle to dip up some of the drippings and pour over the hen. Well, that's called basting. To baste means to moisten the food while it's cooking. To keep it from drying out. And to develop the flavor.

Braise is another word that's used in meat cookery. It describes a method

we use to cook less tender cuts of beef and less expensive cuts of pork, lamb and veal. To braise meat, you first brown it in a little fat. This gives a good flavor. After you've browned the meat, add some liquid and cook the meat slowly in a covered pan at low heat. The liquid you cook the meat in may be water. Or it may be tomatoes, milk or meat stock.

By the way, there's another term you may not be familiar with - "meat stock". that means the liquid meat has been cooked in.

While we're talking about meat cookery, I'll explain two other terms my friend mentioned - fricassee and marinate.

Fricassee is a dish - usually of fowl or veal - cut in pieces and cooked in liquid. You use the same method to make a fricassee that you use in braising. And you thicken the liquid to make a gravy to go with the meat.

To marinate is a method you use to improve the flavor of meat or of cooked vegetables. By marinate, we mean let the meat or the cooked vegetables stand in an acid-- oil liquid. Usually we use French dressing for this. You may make your own mixture of acid and oil. Some of us like more oil and less acid. Others like a strong r flavor of acid. Lemon juice makes a good acid for the marinating mixture. And for the oil, you may use any salad oil.

Saute' is really just a nice word for fry. To saute' means to cook meat or vegetables in a small amount of fat in a pan over direct heat. Cook until the food is lightly browned on all sides.

Now let's see...blanch and mince are two other words my friend asked about. To blanch means to dip food into boiling water and then into cold water to remove the skins. We speak of blanching almonds and tomatoes and peaches.

Mince in the cook's language means to chop very finely. Your recipe may tell you to mince an onion. That means cut it into the finest possible pieces...s• fine that it's almost a solid mass by the time you get through.

And now for some other words in the cook's language. Do you know what the



recipe means when it says to parboil oysters? Or when it says to cream the fat? Or when it says to carmelize the sugar.

These are all common expressions in the cook's language. But if you're a beginner, you may not know that parboil means to cook partially. That is, to boil the oysters in water until they're partly done.

Creaming the fat means to make it soft and smooth. And you do this by letting the fat stand at room temperature until it's softened and then working it with a spoon in a bowl until it's creamy. Or you may use an electric beater to make it soft and smooth.

You carmelize sugar by melting it over low heat in a frying pan. Stir it constantly until it's a golden brown color.

Well, these are just a few of the more common expressions the experienced cook uses when she gives directions for cooking. They seem simple to those of us who've been cooking for a long time. But they're new and strange words to the beginners.

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